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PP RUEH DU RUEHMR RUEHRN  
DE RUEHLU #0222/01 0741507  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 141507Z MAR 08  
FM AMEMBASSY LUANDA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4664  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LUANDA 000222

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/12/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [EINT](#) [EPET](#) [AO](#)  
SUBJECT: EXPAT SECURITY THREATENED IN CABINDA

REF: A. LUANDA 081  
[1](#)B. 06 LUANDA 01281

Classified By: AMB DAN MOZENA FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The GRA remains tight-lipped about recent attacks against expatriates in Cabinda province, and the lack of a transparent investigation into the attacks makes it difficult to know if separatist politics or simple banditry are motivating the criminals. The increased danger posed to expats is curbing onshore investment, at least in the short term, and the Embassy is advising extreme caution to travelers in Cabinda through suggested changes to the Consular Information Sheet and during local meetings of the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC). END SUMMARY

Recent Attacks Target Expats  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) On March 3 a Portuguese citizen was shot by unknown assailants while driving between Dingo and Cabinda City. The victim, employed by the Portuguese public works company Tecnovia, was hit and wounded when an unknown number of assailants fired at his moving vehicle from hiding places in the bush. Elements claiming association with the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), which was legally disbanded following the 2006 signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the GRA and some FLEC elements, claimed responsibility for the attack.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Another attack was directed against a Finnish national and a New Zealand national employed by Crown Agents on February 24. They were attacked, beaten, and robbed by three men, one armed with an AK-47, on a beach five km south of Cabinda City. One victim, a female, was also sexually assaulted. The attackers fled with the company's vehicle, leaving the victims to walk to town in search of assistance. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, which appears to be motivated by banditry.

[1](#)4. (C) These attacks come on the heels of the December 26, 2007 shooting death of a Brazilian national north of Dingo (reftel). In a February 27 meeting with RSO and Poloff, the events surrounding this shooting were further clarified by Geokinetics (formerly Grant Geophysical) Country Manager Chaalen Hage (please protect). Contrary to earlier reports, he said no staff camped overnight at the remote work site and that the attackers were laying in wait when the Brazilian medic arrived, accompanied only by an Angolan medic and their driver. The decision to send a team to the site was made only two days before the visit, and extremely accurate information about both the attack and internal company issues were posted on the pro-FLEC Ibinda.com website shortly following the attack, which Hage called a clear indication of an information leak by locally employed staff. Hage also reported the attackers ordered the two Angolans to "go tell them the FLEC exists," then shot the Brazilian twice in the chest.

## Security Risks Downplayed by GRA, Sonangol

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15. (C) Hage reported multiple meetings with the military commander of the 2nd military region (Cabinda) in the days following the attack; the commander privately confirmed that scattered pockets of armed FLEC supporters remain active in the province. He mentioned several attacks against military outposts and personnel and stated that 10,000 Angolan soldiers were currently deployed in the province, largely working to secure the Congo border. Sonangol security personnel also informed Hage that people had been arrested in connection with this attack, but Hage was not able to confirm this information with military or police personnel.

16. (C) The two most recent attacks have received no official news coverage in Angola, and the GRA has yet to make a public statement. The two shootings were, however, covered in the Portuguese and Brazilian press. When questioned by foreign media, former FLEC leader Bento Bembe insisted that Cabinda is peaceful and denied that former FLEC elements were behind the attacks. In his view, foreign companies need to improve local investment and hiring, and respect local traditions to avoid engendering ill will and discontent. Bembe negotiated and signed the MOU on behalf of the FLEC, an act that some FLEC elements view as traitorous. Elements claiming association with FLEC have been warning foreigners and foreign companies that they should leave the province for several months, stating that the FLEC intends to "destroy everything that sustains the enemy" to show the world that "Cabinda is still at war."

Doesn,t Take Much to Derail Onshore Investment

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17. (C) Geokinetics ceased operations in Cabinda following the attack. Hage expressed anger at the GRA and Sonangol's positive depiction of the security situation Geokinetics would face in Cabinda, as they were told that the FLEC didn't exist and were not warned of any latent security threat. As such, they choose not to hire or travel with private security forces, which Hage initially viewed as a way for the police commanders and army generals who run them to pad their pockets. In retrospect, Hage believes they were "naive" in taking the GRA at its word. Sonangol encouraged Geokinetics to give the GRA three months to resolve the situation and then return to work; Geokinetics refused, and are now working with Sonangol to negotiate an onshore seismic exploration contract south of Luanda. Hage said that a Chinese company, who was the second bidder for the Cabinda contract, has already contacted Sonangol to express their willingness to pick up the onshore seismic exploration project in Cabinda.

18. (C) COMMENT: It is difficult to sort out which acts are driven by political motives and which by banditry. The result, however, is the same either way: an increased threat profile to expatriates, which in turn limits onshore investment for an industry shaken by kidnappings and attacks in the Niger Delta. While most Amcits working in the province are restricted to tightly guarded compounds, the Embassy recommends revising the Consular Information Sheet to warn of attacks against expats and urge extreme caution when traveling in Cabinda. This same message is being conveyed to the resident American community through OSAC. END COMMENT  
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